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THE

BOAT OF CHARON,  
A POEM.

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BY

GEORGE ALFRED FAYLOR.



DENVER, COLORADO.  
1891.



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## PREFATORY.

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As stars at night, that march in wide  
Procession to the sage's ken  
Are scanned, and known thereafter in  
Their magnitude: so men do walk  
Upon the road of Time, into  
The Temple of Eternity,  
Thus roundly measured and thus mapp'd.  
And I, of these, my turn await.

# THE BOAT OF CHARON.

## I.

Man is a thing that's born; and being born it follows that  
He dies. To no time heir, but to a seeming circumstance  
The fellow, he steps from waking light to sleeping shadow  
Man, living, fears the end, and at ending the future dreads,  
Or speeds his mortal pace, and, tired, at last seeks comfort in

The lodge-house of the worm. To sleep where waking  
ends, and where

Mutable laws no more oppress; to be and to become,  
We burn the once lighted, extinguishable lamp, to surfeit  
oft.

Death is a king, and Life, a jester, stands in cap and bells,  
Beside the eternal throne. The earth's a court for fools  
unfeed,

And men wise past their follies, a huge brown top that  
spins round

And casts a shadow, which doth shut the covers of man's  
day,

Thy playhouse, kings, and, beggars, thy prison. Folly  
was in

The die which cast thee, world; the grave sobers thy  
revelry.

The world's a sea, and men ships on it. Each makes a  
voyage  
And rests in port, or, wrecked midway, sinks in the blue.  
Some coast  
By spicy isles, lay in calm streams and fill their happy sails  
To bellying with sweet winds; others, beat by freezing  
gales,  
'Mid icy hills, and shoals, and rugged reefs, hard driven,  
at last  
Drift into Arctic night, and sail no more. Some, chartless  
steer  
To brief destruction down through the narrows; some  
shave the coast  
And the wild breakers ride to fortune and discovery.  
Gold laden, some with crime's rich fruit return; dashed  
with its fruit  
Do some beat on the rocks. Here navigation errs, cur-  
rents  
Confound the card, and tides do ebb when they should  
landward flow,  
Wherein lie problems vaster than the weight of suns; and  
yet  
'Tis simply Fate, now mending childhood's broken toys,  
and now  
Sinking the scale of empire. It makes contemplation great.  
The sick man views a paradise in health; the poor in wealth;  
The wretch in an unrighteous gain; the rake in some  
fresh roam

By town or main. Voluptuaries find in houri's charms  
The heaven the weary view, beyond all life's alarms.  
Alone,

The sage philosopher, in old Contentment's bone, oft seeks  
The sweet marrow of a wise pleasure. 'Twas such a one  
I knew:

Aged and pale haired, and mild as melting Winter when  
Spring  
Brings forth perennial flowers; wise in all wisdom, and  
more soft

In the sweet essence of good nature, than the teat fed  
babe

Or politician office bent; a large proletariat  
Out of times; a lay minister of a philosophy  
Untried; above the world, yet humbly conscious of the  
breadth

Of Nature's God; ambitious to no big supernal end,  
A worm who knew his magnitude and gauged himself a  
worm.

When morning broke, and day first gathered form, then  
he was forth

Bathing his grateful soul in the magnetic flood of Heav'n.  
He lived the day, and in the star and planet-freckled eve,  
He scanned the worlds that walked their treadmill orbits  
round the sun.

In deep battallions ranged he viewed the starry army pass,  
With funereal pace, down the wide slope of night; and  
when

The heart-fire slept, and on his guard the honest watch-dog sate,

A healthful and dreamless repose drowned out his happy day.

For him at dewy morn and eve, no loving wife looked out,  
No curious small family hung round his ancient knee,  
To hear his ancient tales. He deemed the bachelor happy,

Escaped the pains, the pleasures and excessive ecstasies  
Of a superfluous life. Not him the soulful dove-eyed  
Senorita's song and tuned and touched guitar made gay;  
But oft for him a bowed and seamed old fifer on his reed  
blew out

Old tunes and sober melodies, and airs that once had led  
The Southern fighters to the war, and these he simply  
deemed

Voluptuous. In high capacious hall, he sought no vain  
And heartless company; but, greatly humble, loved his  
dog,

And the children and the poor, for these were next to  
nature.

Small versed in worldly ways, he deemed the right that  
which was right—

Man's dishonor shook his faith in man and woman's in God.  
So lived the gray old solitaire, bent on the knee of Time.  
So on the road of life he passed, slow to the silent inn,  
The caravansary of sleeping citizens, and where



The clay outlasts the mould, and brains of kings, and beggar's hands

Forget their offices, he found a perfect rest at last,  
Amid the eternal oblivion of a nameless grave.

## II.

Now toll, ye thunders, and ye clouds, hang out your deepest black.

Another wand'ring soul embarks upon the Stygian flood.  
Here awful night lay on the shore of earth, and, overhead,  
A starless canopy of jet roofed in the blackened world  
Old Tempest, bellowing, roared out across the Northern steppe,

And there the lightning slipped its leash, and with horrific orb

Scanned all the sky; then fled down to destruction through the East.

Brief radiance this, and yet it seemed the curtained gloom was drawn

Aside, and fabled lamps of Heav'n were shone upon the scene.

In the glare old Charon, ferryman on the last river,  
Stood, cowed helmsman to the dead, doomed with his craft to fathom

Pluto's seas. With silent keel swift passed his black-ribbed vessel

Along the void, he aft. The deck, a dark, prodigious

Sarcophagus, held many a soul, and one the parting sage.  
Around large tribes of the lower creation floated out,  
And farther than on ocean reach the eyes, the train  
pursued.

Thus, with its freight, the Boat of Charon drifted to the  
sea.

Soon was the earth left spinning on its round, and from  
the wave,

Up rose the dead world Moon, like the face of a pure  
woman,

And rolled down the solemn flood. Then it was left  
behind.

Opposed the sun's irradiance, down through the under-  
world,

Still flowed the silent stream, still rowed the silent gon-  
doler,

And all the dead drift of the animate world came after.

So the migrating herds on hyperborean fields press back  
Into the North, when hungry Winter shows his icy front.

Now was the beamy Sun lost with his rays, gone down  
behind

The convex distance. With speed beyond even man  
to know,

Left as a burning star, mid solemn fields star strewn, at  
last

The earth went o'er the gloomy horizon, and with its kind

To disappearance passed, and all but gloom, a speckless  
sea,

Was lost; yet onward went the boatman and his crewless  
bark.

Now perished heat, and thence, a vasty desert rolled, a  
plain,

To desolation given o'er, like which men fathom not.

Nor he, the boatman, halted ev'r, nor slacked his pon-  
d'rous flight,

But as the comet falls, or backs, yet frictionless, he being  
In nature anomalous, swept on and swiftly onward.

There never desert was nor void eternal, nor ever  
A voyage but had digression and an end. So with this.  
At last new skies arose, new heavens beamed on the  
boatman's ken;

New systems, people in the solar realm and like in kind  
To small Earth's fellows, and such as intervening, Charon  
His whole route long saw rise and set in distant latitudes,  
Strewing the plains of space, now lay like monsters in a  
sea

Of twilight. The universe fashions its communities.

Not the sardines or gilly crew of trout that spear the wave  
Have confines more than grandest systems. These roam  
in waters,

Within restricted room, those soar in space's airs with  
flight

Curtailed; and as to man, to fish and to the winging birds  
Is limit giv'n, so giv'n to those tremendous animals,  
Are realms with borders absolute; and as to man's small  
mind,

The wild'ring vacancies of space reach out into the night,  
So to the sytems, citizens and glorious peoples  
Of the world above the world, lie there eternal regions  
Beyond comprehension. And to the limit of that world's  
Farthest state, inhabited of giant systems, sailing out  
A silent awful wand'rer o'er the gloom and passive stream  
Unto the wide, still ocean of this realm of whirling spheres,  
The boatman sped his bark. On to the utmost shore of it,  
Where day to twilight merged, upon the verge of star-  
less night,

Reaching to voids eternal and the haunt of deep chaos,  
A murky sea, isle-fretted lay. Thither he oared and  
there,

Eased of his cargo, lay upon the shore. Demons there  
were

Prodigious in bulk and black, scaled as the crocodile,  
Each huge as earth, and frowning each, that held a  
guardian place

O'er lightnings storms and thunder-bolts. To them the  
souls passed in,

With lightnings merged and passed from individuality.

Thus to the cycle and the sphere creation tends, blending  
The whence and whither, as waters sprung from the  
ocean's womb  
Return to ocean.

\* \* \* Then Charon, a boatman on a cruise,  
More lone than comet doomed to roam the frontiers of  
old space,  
Oared back, a cowed, sad skipper on an ebb tide, and  
still  
He urged his ebon passage when from view of suns and  
worlds  
The stream of Styx was perished; on, in gloom, he,  
silent, swept.





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